

blm - alaska

frontiers

managing the Public Lands for multiple use

Issue 13 November 1988

BLM opens new building in Fairbanks



BLM's new building on University Avenue and Airport Way offers mid-town convenience. All three BLM northern district offices are in the building.

You won't have to get an Army pass to visit the BLM offices in Fairbanks any more. The Arctic, Kobuk and Steese/White Mountains district offices and the Fairbanks Support Center have moved from Fort Wainwright to a new building.

Located on the corner of University Avenue and Airport Way, the building is next to the State of Alaska's Department of Natural Resources.

"I'm excited about this move," said BLM State Director Mike Penfold. "This location provides

more convenient access than the previous offices, and co-locating with the State of Alaska will provide the public with 'one-stop shopping' on many land management issues."

The building was finished in August, and employees moved in September. The two-story concrete building was built by Kiewit Construction. An attractive oak-paneled reception area opens the way to the public land information office on the first floor.

The various district offices are on the second floor. The Chena

River flows behind the building, and trails lead to the banks of the river.

The new address is:
Bureau of Land Management
1150 University Avenue
Fairbanks, Alaska, 99709-3844.

Phone numbers are:
Receptionist: 474-2200
Land Information Office: 474-2250
Public Affairs: 474-2230
Arctic District: 474-2300
Kobuk District: 474-2330
Steese/White Mountain District: 474-2350

-SM

Alaska BLM fire fighters zoom down to help fight raging fires in lower 48 states

As fires continue to rage across the western United States, Alaska fire fighters joined the firelines. The Alaska inter-agency Fire Coordination Center, which represents both state and federal fire suppression agencies, coordinated the dispatch of almost 1,400 Alaskans as well as airplanes, equipment and supplies to support the emergency efforts.

The Alaskan fire fighters are employed by the BLM, the State of Alaska, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and members of village emergency fire fighting crews. Fire fighters in Alaska are part of a national network of fire fighting resources that can be shifted to areas where they are most needed.

The Alaska Class I overhead team, a group of specialists trained to supervise fire operations, went to fight the 61,300-acre Storm Creek fire in the Custer National Forest in eastern Montana. Other Alaskan crews and individuals went to fires in Idaho, Oregon, Montana and California.

Each crew sent to the Lower 48 had 20 people, including an agency liaison officer. By September, 54 crews were in the lower 48, along with 343 overhead people working in miscellaneous jobs.

Three helicopters, six air tankers and other planes that had been on contract to the Alaska Fire Service and the State of Alaska from May through July were also sent to the lower 48. The Alaska fire Service warehouse sent over 400,000 pounds of equipment and supplies to support the fire fighters.

In the last three years, the reputation these fire fighters earned as hard working and well-trained forces caused national fire officials to request them again.

—SM

At press time, almost all Alaskan crews were back in Alaska. Up to 62 crews were in the lower 48 at the high point of the job.



Biggest fire season in ten years hits Alaska

It started early and ended late. The 1988 fire season burned 2.1 million acres in Alaska, more land than in any season since 1977, when 2.3 million acres burned.

In mid April a fire was reported south of the Tanana river. It was called the Alpha fire since it was the first of the year and occurred on the Army's Alpha Zone artillery range. At first it was monitored because fire fighters couldn't be sent into an area where there might be live ammunition.

In June the hot, dry weather caused Alpha fire to blanket Fairbanks with smoke and interfere with flights at Fairbanks International Airport. Soon the fire spread outside the live ammunition area, and fire fighters went in to mop up the edges, while its interior continued to smolder.

Many new fires started throughout the month including a fire 15 miles north of Livengood. This occurred in a limited suppression area and was allowed to burn. By early July, this fire had grown to 110,000 acres and was within seven miles of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. Eighty fire fighters were sent in on July 5 to prevent it from getting any closer to the pipeline. Meanwhile, the Alpha fire kept on burning.

Then attention began to shift to the Galena Zone, where a 25,000-acre fire in the Waring Mountains 35 miles southeast of Ambler was sending smoke into the Kobuk Valley. A class II overhead team was sent out, remaining for more than 21 days, battling the stubborn fire as it burned several Native allotments.

By the middle of July, lightning started 27 new fires in the Galena Zone. The Sun Mountain and Bear Mountain fires near Huslia jumped firelines and forced crews to take refuge as dry conditions helped fuel these blazes.



Alpha fire was monitored as it burned. At the end of July, rain helped fire fighters put out the fires in the Galena Zone.

But the rains didn't come to the Upper Yukon Zone and fires there continued to spread. On Porcupine fire, it was demobilized and manned again when it refused to die. At the end of the month, the class II team was sent to the 124,500 acre Crocodile fire, 40 miles northeast of Central on the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge. It increased 11,500 acres in one day, threatening the village of Birch Creek. Later it spread into two other fires, reaching a combined size of 309,106 acres.

Meanwhile the Alpha fire kept on smoking.

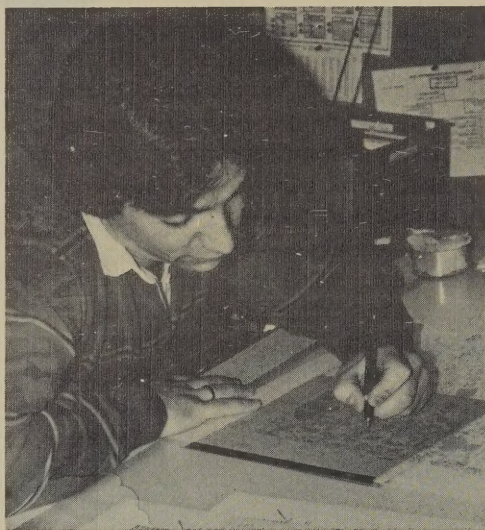
By mid-August the fire situation in the lower 48 had become acute and as Alaska's weather cooled, 41 fire fighting crews and the Alaska class I overhead team headed south.

The Alpha fire was finally declared out on Labor Day weekend.

-SM

Billions of records

The new system may mean the difference between spending four to five days researching as compared to three to five minutes.



Greg Balen of BLM's branch of photogrammetry, photorevises townships.

When I saw my friend Bill last week, I asked him if he got the moose he went hunting for. "Well," he replied quietly, "I saw a lot of caribou, a great horned owl and even a bear, but I didn't see a single moose the whole ten days.

"I think that area must be the winter range or something. There were moose pellets everywhere, but they were all dried up."

"Too bad," I thought, "but hunters, miners, recreationists and anyone else will be able to find out what's on BLM's Public Lands a lot easier when we get the new automated national land records system up and running. In a few years they'll be able to get information with the touch of a couple buttons."

The BLM and its predecessor agencies have been keeping track of land information every since Congress established the Public Land Survey System in 1785. As years passed and the nation grew, the volume of information BLM stored about the public lands grew too. Today BLM has more than a billion documents related to the public lands. These include things like grazing and mineral leases, rights-of-way applications, mining claims and legal descriptions.

Historically this information was stored on paper or mylar. Then in the late 1970s with the advent of computer technology, BLM began automating some kinds of records.

Now the BLM is beginning to implement a new, highly automated Land Information System. The system will be phased in over an eight-year period and will affect the public lands and virtually all public land users well beyond the year 2000.

This new system will produce information much faster, and the information will be more complete and up-to-date than is possible now. It will be standardized and connected throughout the BLM, nationwide.

"Basically we will be able to tell anyone what's where and who it

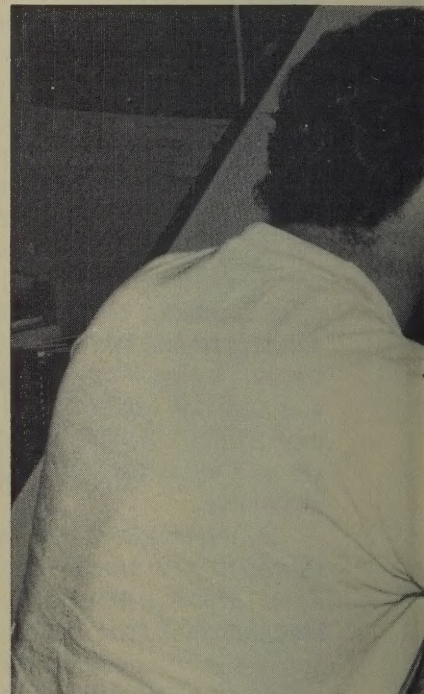
belongs to," says Hal Wolverton, BLM's Land Information System project manager. "We will be able to tailor the information to a specific need or question."

For example a hunter like Bill will be able to find out about moose populations in three ways: by a legal description of the area, by Congressional district or by BLM district.

And if that hunter is moving to Colorado, he will be able to find out about its game species by location before he leaves Alaska.

Individuals interested in mineral leasing will be able to obtain up-to-date status of lands open to leasing. And BLM will be able to keep track of the cumulative acreage leased by companies on a nationwide basis.

BLM's Alaska and New Mexico state offices are two of the states in the lead to implement the new system. "Alaska is helping develop the necessary software because we have considerable expertise and urgently need to convert our land records from one of the oldest mainframe computers in the BLM," says Wolverton. "Also, Alaska has some unique situations that we want



Bill Johnston enters revised township data. Now every point on the map relates to a specific location.

at your fingertips

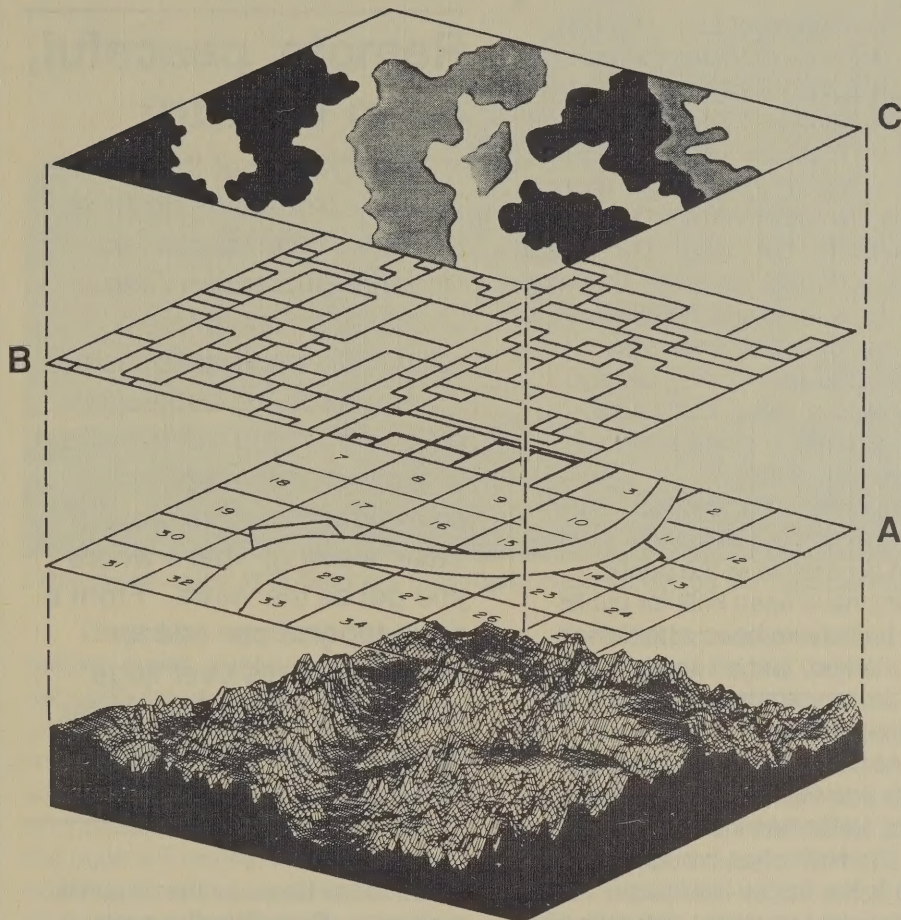
to be able to build into the system, such as including navigable waters and the boundaries of the Native regional corporations."

"We hope to have the national system operational in about five years," said BLM-Alaska Associate State Director Les Rosenkrance. "In the meantime BLM-Alaska is working to have an interim system operational within two years. This interim system will contain information now found in the Automated Land and Mineral Record System," he said.

Some advantages of the new system are that:

- users will be able to find something by name, by the sound of the name or by the applicant number. Once people learn how to use the system, they'll be able to use it in other locations.
- generic data such as drainages, boundaries, contours and legal descriptions will be standardized.
- data can be manipulated on screen to predict various land use scenarios and the impacts associated with them before decisions are made.

—EB



Here's how the new system will be structured:

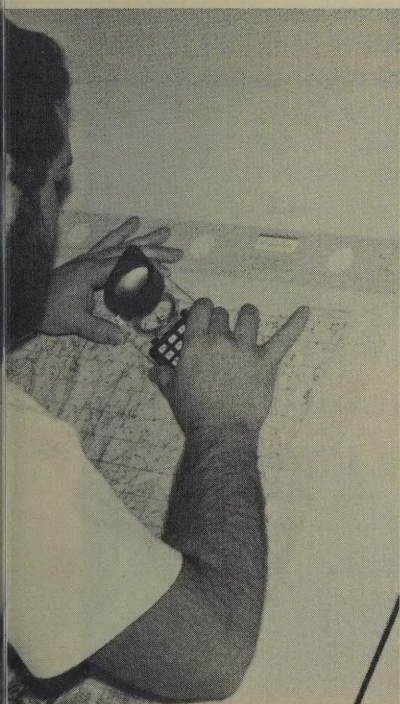
A. Automated Geographic Coordinate Data Base is based on information from the National Public Land Survey System. This provides the ability to link records and resource data to legal descriptions of land parcels.

B. Automated Land and Mineral Record System stores information about land ownership status, special designations, and land use authorizations such as mineral leases, mining claims and rights-of-way. This is the same data as can now be found on master title plats.

C. Automated Resource Data contains information about the natural and cultural resources of the land. This data is typically represented in a variety of formats including maps, tables, charts and reports. Examples include wildlife habitat and timber sales.

The BLM Land Information System will link these three parts. The result will be more efficient land and resource planning and better information in the hands of the public. BLM's commitment to implement the system is huge in terms of both dollars and time, but long-term savings and efficiency will be considerable.

—EB



into the computer with a "puck."
ot on the ground.

BLM sets ORV areas in Steese and White Mountains

The Bureau of Land Management recently published off-road vehicle (ORV) designations for the Steese National Conservation Area and the White Mountains National Recreation Area north of Fairbanks. ORVs are allowed in some parts of these areas, but in other parts there are specific restrictions on ORV use.

The Steese and White Mountains conservation units were designated as special areas by Congress in 1980. Each area covers a million acres of land; access is limited.

Over the past few years the BLM has worked to make the areas more accessible to the public. Cabins have been built for public use; trails have been established and marked, and an access road and campgrounds are planned for the near future.

As more people have brought ORVs into these semi-primitive areas, traffic has increased

This traffic has brought problems to the fragile landscape. BLM has focused on winter recreation in

Remote, peaceful, open country

A large part of the Steese National Conservation Area and the White Mountains National Recreation Area is unspoiled miles of trees, rolling hills and alpine tundra.

No roads, no bottles, no cans. When you get to the top of a hill, it's rounded and covered with tundra, so it's easy walking. That's where you get all the views. From a ridge top you can see for miles and miles over ridge after ridge, rolling hills as far as you can see into the distance.

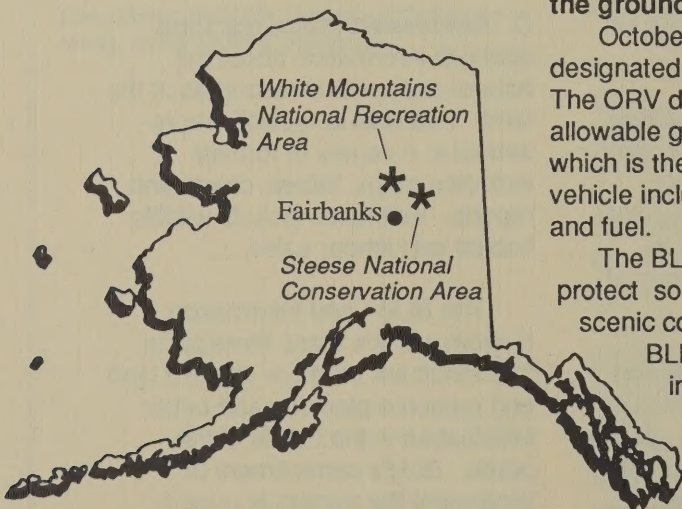
these areas because the terrain is so boggy. **Surprisingly, even when the land is covered with snow, heavy ORVs can damage the ground.**

October 15 to April 30 has been designated as the winter-use period. The ORV designations specify allowable gross vehicle weight, which is the loaded weight of the vehicle including passengers, gear and fuel.

The BLM has taken steps to protect some unusually spectacular scenic country and wildlife habitat.

BLM employees are explaining to visitors how they can prevent damage, and asking their help in protecting the public lands.

For a copy of the complete ORV designations and a large map, write to the Steese/White Mountains District, 1150 University Avenue, Fairbanks, AK 99709-3844; or call (907) 474-2350.



AAAAGH!!

They're changing our address...

BLM's state office address in Anchorage is going to be changed as of January 1, 1989.

No, we're not moving—it's just that they're going to change the street address for the Federal Building.

According to Jess Avila of General Services Administration, "The whole project for a change is so visitors can find and get into the building easier." Avila said the present number was issued before the building was built. "The builder needed an address, and then it just stuck, even though the only door on C Street was locked."

The new street address will be:

**222 West 7th Avenue.
Anchorage, Alaska**

Also, it seems the Post Office computers can't handle the word "box," so the symbol "#" should be substituted from now on when you write to BLM.

The new mailing address will be:

**Bureau of Land Management
Alaska State Office
222 W. 7th Ave., #13
Anchorage, AK 99513**

—JGM

Bureau of Land Management



USE ☆ SHARE ☆ APPRECIATE

BLM Biologists study salmon runs at Nyac

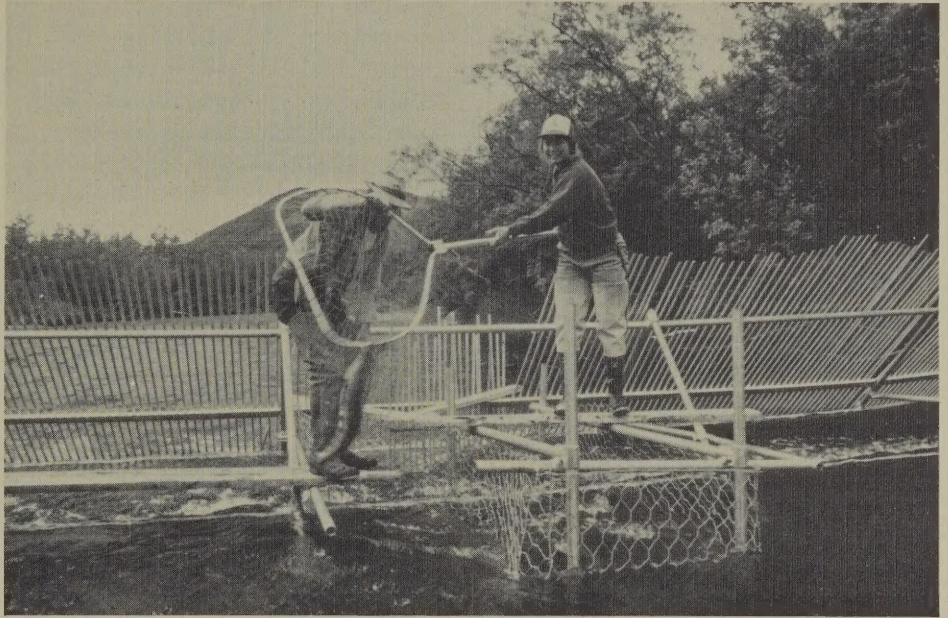
In a state well known for its outstanding fishing, there would seem to be little need for fisheries enhancement projects. "Not so," says BLM Anchorage District fisheries biologist Mike Scott.

Scott is heading a fisheries study on the Tuluksak River. "By finding out more about the numbers of salmon coming upriver, we eventually hope to be able to supplement the king salmon run to benefit both the commercial and subsistence users," says Scott.

"The Nyac area has been heavily mined since the early 1900's. The mining tailings can provide fish rearing areas, but most of the spawning areas have been altered."

The salmon typically reach the upper Tuluksak River at Nyac about the first of July. The runs peak about the second and third week of July and have finished spawning about the first of August.

In late June, fisheries biologists Beth Kaplin and Dave Sarafin set up a fish weir blocking the entire river. As the fish moved upstream to spawn, the weir forced them into a hold box or "trap." Every few hours Kaplin and Sarafin collected and counted the fish in the box and released them upstream of the weir.



Fisheries biologists Mike Scott and Beth Kaplin count salmon on the Tuluksak River.

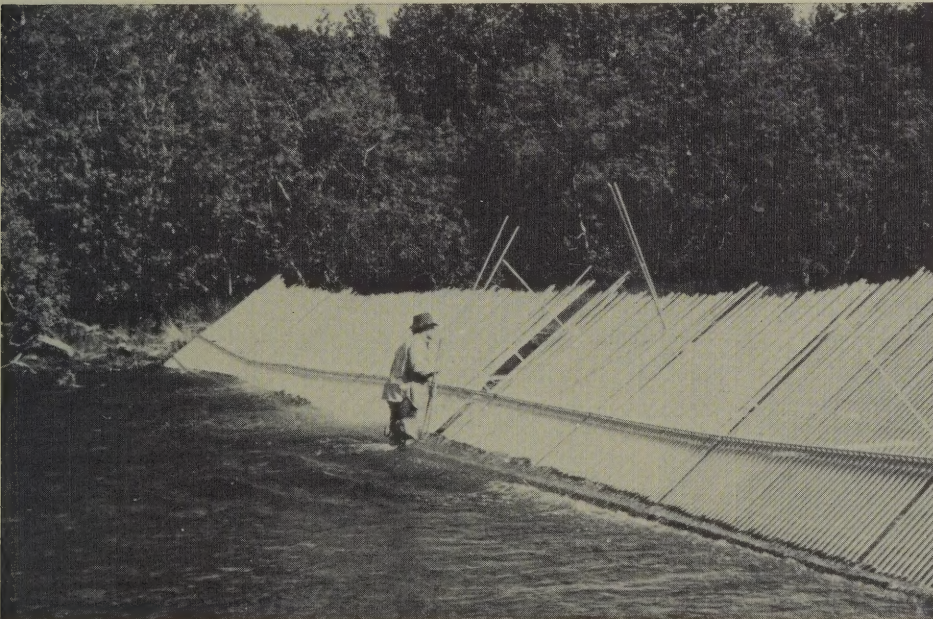
Toward the end of July, two king salmon males and two females were set aside for an experimental enhancement project. Approximately 10,000 eggs from these king salmon were fertilized and placed in an incubator. Until early October, the eggs will remain in the incubator, which is located on a diversion channel used for Nyac's hydroelectric facility. Then they will be transferred to floating incubators in the Tuluksak River to keep them from freezing.

A second incubator was placed on the banks of Dugout Creek. Water temperatures will be monitored this winter to insure that the system does not freeze. If the Dugout Creek site can provide a year-round source of water for the incubator, the incubator from the diversion ditch will be relocated to Dugout Creek, where the facility will become permanent.

"In future years we hope to be counting the number of king salmon returning to the system as a result of the project," says Scott.

"Besides enabling us to collect the kings for the egg take, the weir also helped both BLM and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game obtain an accurate count on the number of salmon that escape to the upper Tuluksak River. This will help them better understand and manage the fisheries in an area where multiple-use activities are taking place," says Scott.

-TH-R



Fisheries biologist Dave Sarafin works on the weir across the Tuluksak River at Nyac.

frontier flashes

The final cumulative environmental impact statement on placer mining for **Beaver Creek** is at the printer's and will be available for the public in mid-November, according to Page Spencer, project coordinator for the BLM's EIS team. The **Birch Creek EIS** will be published in early December and the **Fortymile EIS** is due the second week in January, she said.

The Bureau of Land Management Kobuk district office has just published a management plan for the **Galena Mountain Area of Critical Environmental Concern**. This area was designated in the 1986 Central Yukon Resource Management Plan to protect crucial caribou habitat. Copies of the plan can be requested from the BLM public affairs office, 1150 University Ave., Fairbanks, AK 99709-3844; phone 474-2230.

BLM Alaska State Director **Mike Penfold** received one of the government's highest honors in September, a **Presidential Meritorious Executive Rank Award**. This award is based on outstanding achievement, leadership and ability to resolve difficult management issues. It is granted after an extensive review of candidates from all federal agencies.

Penfold has previously received Interior Department meritorious and distinguished service awards.



Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel presents Presidential award to BLM Alaska State Director Mike Penfold in Washington.

BLM arranged for a private contractor to remove two PCB-laden transformers from an inactive mine site at **Red Devil** in late September. Samples taken from other suspect materials at the site will be analyzed for the presence of hazardous wastes. The three-acre mine, abandoned since 1971, contains unpatented federal mining claims.

Four BLM employees who were working nearby **helped rescue tourists injured in a tragic bus accident** near Eagle, Alaska, recently. When a tour bus carrying 42 passengers went off the narrow mountain road, BLM anthropologist Bob King, temporary employees Holli McClain and Michael Allison, and seasonal employee Sarge Waller drove to the crash site and helped get injured passengers from the bus, carried them to the road and gave them emergency medical care to the. BLM supplied gauze, bandages and sleeping bags to prevent hypothermia.



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